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Disarmament Commission

313th meeting

Tuesday, 5 April 2011, 3 p.m.

New York

Chair: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Sanabria (Spain), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): The Philippines congratulates the Chair of the Commission and the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved elections to guide this session of the Disarmament Commission. Likewise, allow me to express my thanks to the Ambassador of Benin for his efforts as Chair at the last session. The Philippines is confident that, under the leadership and guidance of the Bureau, this session of the Commission will yield positive results. Likewise, we welcome the statement made by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte.

The Philippines fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I wish to highlight and elaborate on a few points.

We have heard in various forums of the prevailing positive atmosphere in disarmament negotiations. Indeed, the disarmament community has much to be proud of, but we can ill afford to revert to the days of inactivity that previously characterized the work of those in disarmament. The positive momentum must be continued in this three-week session. The Philippines maintains the belief that the Disarmament Commission remains a vital mechanism in the field of disarmament. We fully subscribe to the principles and objectives of this body and reaffirm the importance and continuing relevance of the Commission, given its universal membership and ability to submit substantive recommendations on urgent disarmament issues to the General Assembly.

It is the universality of this body of which we must take advantage. In this forum, delegations that are not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or members of the Conference on Disarmament can come face to face to share and express views on vital security issues. We must take advantage of the unique character of the Commission and use it to further improve the global peace and security situation for all.

The Philippines believes that, in spite of recent gains made in May 2010 at the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, much still has to be done in terms of eliminating the most deadly weapons in existence, namely, nuclear weapons. It is incumbent upon all nations to see to it that these weapons do not spread and are eliminated in an irreversible, transparent and verifiable manner. I wish to highlight that other nations and international organizations must be given the opportunity to participate or be included in any verification process that could lead to the ultimate dismantling of these horrific arsenals. International observers should be given a role to play in future nuclear disarmament efforts.

In this context, the Philippines highly commends the Russian Federation and the United States of America for ratifying the New START agreement and

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urges those countries to forge ahead and consider more aggressive efforts that would lead to the total elimination of nuclear arms. We also call on all other countries possessing nuclear weapons to follow their lead and pursue negotiations on nuclear disarmament at the earliest opportunity or proceed to disarmament unilaterally. The Philippines firmly believes that the only way to totally eliminate the threat or use of nuclear weapons is their complete destruction.

The Philippines is also firmly committed to the two other pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, namely, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The recent tragic events in Japan highlight the dangers that can arise even in the area of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In this regard, the Philippines offers its most sincere condolences to the victims of the tragedy that befell Japan less than a month ago. At the same time, we emphasize the need for nuclear security measures. It may be recalled that the consensus outcome of the 2010 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)) included a number of points relating to nuclear security.

These events also bring to the fore the importance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and efforts that may be required to support it. Aside from the IAEA, the Philippines also recognizes the contribution that was made by the monitoring stations of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in detecting nuclear radiation coming from the damaged plants in Japan, which served as a form of early warning. This is further proof of the usefulness of the CTBTO and the need for the CTBT to enter into force.

The Philippines is a staunch supporter of the CTBT and hosts three of the monitoring stations essential to the CTBTO's operations. The Philippines calls on all States to ban all forms of nuclear testing and urges those States whose signatures and ratifications are necessary for the Treaty to enter into force to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

The Philippines attaches due importance to the establishment of a universal, legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, we are convinced of the usefulness and necessity of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome the establishment of more such zones and call on nuclear-weapon States to respect them. The Bangkok Treaty is a significant contribution of the Association of South East Asian Nations to this important effort, and we hope that nuclear-weapon States will accede to its Protocol. The Philippines welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status.

We look forward to the early establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In this regard, the Philippines hopes that, even with the changes that have occurred in the region, what was agreed upon in the 2010 NPT Review Conference with regard to the 1995 Middle East resolution will still be implemented. This relates in particular to the following three points.

First, the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, shall convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East. Secondly, the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, shall appoint a facilitator, with a mandate to support the implementation of the 1995 resolution by conducting consultations with the States of the region, and in that regard shall undertake preparations for the convening of the 2012 conference. Thirdly, the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 Middle East resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, shall designate a host Government for the 2012 conference.

The Philippines understands that if the 2012 conference is to be a success, all nations in the region must attend, participate and negotiate. The conference should not be turned into a blaming-and-naming forum, where participating delegations are singled out and condemned. Participants need to come to the conference with an open mind and a sincere desire to negotiate. It is possible that the conference may not result in tangible agreements that would create the zone outright, but it could serve as the beginning of a process that would eventually lead to what we all want to see in that part of the world.

It is therefore extremely important that those who have been charged with taking action must carry out their tasks with haste, given the fact that 2012 is already fast approaching. Specifically, the Philippines

hopes that a facilitator and host Government will be selected soon so that adequate preparations can be made for next year's conference.

The Philippines supports calls for an international conference that will set the parameters for the elimination of nuclear weapons and prohibit their production, stockpiling, transfer, and use or threat of use, and provide for the destruction of such weapons. We assign great importance to the identification of a specified time frame for the destruction of such weapons and the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention, as called for by the Secretary-General in his five-point action plan. Different time frames have been proposed. What is critically important to the Philippines is that any timeline agreed upon in the future be realistic and fall within a reasonable period of time. It defies all logic and reason that non-nuclear-weapon States should wait patiently until such a time as nuclear-weapon States are comfortable enough and willing to eliminate their weapons. This is not what the representatives of the non-nuclear-weapon States that agreed to the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 had in mind.

The Philippines, as one of the countries that submitted pleadings to the International Court of Justice, recognizes and unequivocally supports the Court's unanimous conclusion that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

At the start of my statement, I said that the disarmament community had been a victim of atrophy and that recently there had been some forward movement. Unfortunately, this positive momentum has not been taken up by our colleagues in Geneva. The Conference on Disarmament has been a rudderless, directionless ship floating along aimlessly since 1996. The Philippines commends recent initiatives of the Secretary-General, such as the convening of the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament in September 2010, and the General Assembly's consensus adoption of resolution 65/93, on follow-up to the High-level Meeting.

The Philippines believes that unless the concerns of some delegations are addressed, the Conference on Disarmament will continue to remain this way. The Philippines only hopes that progress will be achieved in the Conference, and soon.

The Philippines and like-minded and similarly situated observer States to the Conference on Disarmament have called on the Conference to appoint a special rapporteur to examine the question of membership expansion. The limited membership of the Conference on Disarmament is a relic of past historical circumstances. The Conference could certainly be invigorated by the participation and full engagement of nations that are currently kept out.

The Philippines recognizes that multilateral, regional and bilateral discussions should be continuously pursued as the tools to achieve success in this area. We call on States to pursue multilateral negotiations, as agreed in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2).

We have now entered the fourth disarmament decade, 2010-2020. The work of our predecessors must be continued and the success that was achieved during the first three decades has to be consolidated and built upon aggressively and progressively. The Philippines would therefore like to see the elements of the declaration of the fourth disarmament decade include relevant issues in the field of disarmament, so as to address the concerns of all.

With regard to practical confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the field of conventional arms, the Philippines recognizes these as essential to achieving international peace and security. Conventional weapons, although not as destructive as nuclear weapons, have actually killed and maimed more people due to their proliferation, widespread use and mass production. CBMs establish the climate of trust necessary to the reduction of tensions and the elimination of hostile situations. This, in turn, may lead to further progress in terms of disarmament.

Lastly, the Philippines views multilateral cooperation as a key factor of disarmament. Through this approach, nations can make progress in the important field of disarmament.

In conclusion, the Philippine delegation would like to assure the Chair of the Commission and the members of the Bureau of its readiness to participate in the most constructive and cooperative manner in this

year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Al Bayati, the Ambassador of Iraq, on his election as the Chair of the 2011 session of the Disarmament Commission. I am confident that, under his able leadership and with the assistance of the Vice-Chairs, the close cooperation of all representatives and the professional assistance of the Secretariat, this session of the Disarmament Commission will be crowned with success. I assure members of the full cooperation of my delegation towards the successful outcome of this session of the Commission.

I also wish to associate myself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation reaffirms the important role and function of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body mandated to consider and make recommendations on major disarmament issues. While we do not underestimate the formulation of more than a dozen principles, guidelines and recommendations by the Commission in the past, it is regrettable that the Commission has not been able to formulate an exclusive set of recommendations on nuclear disarmament since its inception, in 1978, while nuclear disarmament has always been the highest priority of the international community. Resolution 1 (I), adopted unanimously by the General Assembly at its first session on 24 January 1946, called for the total elimination of atomic bombs.

Given that the General Assembly, in the Final Document of its first special session devoted to disarmament (resolution S-10/2), strongly emphasized the need for the removal of the threat of nuclear weapons, their total elimination and the prevention of their proliferation, and consequently mandated the Disarmament Commission to follow up on the relevant decisions and recommendations of that session, there are high expectations for the Commission to end its inaction and take the necessary measures with regard to nuclear disarmament, thus fulfilling these long-delayed aspects of its mandate. Accordingly, in our view, the agenda item dealing with nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is of the utmost relevance and importance.

Despite the repeated claims of some nuclear-weapon States regarding their compliance with their legal obligations in the fields of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the latest facts and figures strongly call into question the validity and credibility of such claims. For instance, the budget request for fiscal year 2012 by a certain nuclear-weapon State not only reveals its considerable plans to modernize its nuclear weapons arsenal and production facilities, including the construction of two new nuclear-weapon production factories, but also discloses its pledge to spend well over $100 billion on modernizing a number of its missiles, submarines and bombers designed to deliver nuclear warheads. Indeed, such measures indisputably constitute non-compliance by the States concerned with their nuclear disarmament obligations.

Such policies and practices, and the fact that nuclear-weapon States continue to believe in the deterrent role of nuclear weapons, indicate the persistent threat posed to humanity by the continued existence and modernization of nuclear weapons, the threat of their use and their possible deliberate or accidental use. Under such circumstances, the international community has no choice but to react collectively by redoubling its efforts to rid the world of the threat of nuclear weapons once and for all.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the overwhelming majority of States, maintains its principled position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons as a matter of the highest priority is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons. In this regard, while we support the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement on the adoption of a legal framework with specified timelines for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2025, we emphasize the high priority and major importance of starting negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention and a universal and unconditional legally binding instrument on negative security assurances.

With regard to the stated intention of some nuclear-weapon States to reduce part of their nuclear arsenals, we are of the view that limited bilateral and unilateral arms reductions are far below the expectations of the international community for real and effective steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and can never be a substitute for the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate their nuclear weapons. Moreover, such

reductions should go beyond the mere decommissioning of nuclear weapons and must be irreversible, transparent and internationally verifiable.

At the same time, the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament is not the only challenge facing the international community, as some nuclear-weapon States are proliferating nuclear weapons horizontally and vertically by continuing nuclear-weapon-sharing arrangements with non-nuclear-weapon States and other nuclear-weapon States alike.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the best way to guarantee the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is the full and non-selective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We must ensure the universality of the NPT, in particular in the Middle East, where the nuclear weapons programme of the only non-party to the NPT, which has been assisted by France, seriously threatens regional and international peace and security.

To overcome this problem, Iran proposed the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in 1974. But efforts to establish such a zone have not yet succeeded due to the persistent refusal of the Israeli Zionist regime to join the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime. In this context, the implementation of the relevant resolution of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex) is essential to the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and the universality of the Treaty in the Middle East.

The inalienable right of all NPT parties to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination remains one of the basic pillars of the Treaty. Not only should there be no restrictions on exports of material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes, but also non-proliferation measures or further progress in strengthening safeguards must not prejudice the national development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

As we support all legitimate international efforts towards the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we express concern over attempts by certain countries to narrow down the three pillars of the NPT to one pillar, non-proliferation, by equating nuclear weapons with nuclear energy, even though the other two pillars are equally important.

The ability to monopolize scientific knowledge and peaceful nuclear energy is an unrealistic illusion. Suppression, deprivation, intimidation and double standards are the main evils that should be removed from international relations. Like other States parties to the NPT, the Islamic Republic of Iran has an inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology. Iran is determined to exercise that right and, in doing so, it takes its responsibilities seriously. Contrary to the allegations made yesterday on behalf of the European Union, Iran's nuclear activities are and always have been carried out for peaceful purposes. The IAEA has repeatedly confirmed the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme.

The Islamic Republic Iran has always demonstrated its readiness to negotiate with concerned parties, without preconditions, and reiterates its willingness to engage in serious and constructive negotiations based on justice and mutual respect. It is now up to the other parties to change their past policies and demonstrate their goodwill. We have no doubt that raising such allegations is nothing but an attempt to divert attention from the horrendous record of non-compliance by those countries with their nuclear disarmament obligations, including through nuclear weapon-sharing, hosting nuclear weapons in their territories and assisting the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East, the Israeli regime, with its nuclear weapons programme.

Accordingly, instead of making unfounded claims against Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, they should fully comply with their obligations in terms of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including by addressing the real and immediate threats posed by the hundreds of nuclear weapons deployed on their continent. We stress once again that, in order to ensure equal and sustainable security for all States, the international community has no choice but to resort to the force of logic to avoid the logic of force, and to promote the rule of law.

Finally, we look forward to working with the Chair of the Commission and all delegations towards achieving a successful outcome of the current session of the Commission.

Mr. Proaño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating the Republic of

Iraq on the election of its Permanent Representative as Chair of the Disarmament Commission for 2011. I would also like to assure him of my delegation's full cooperation in his work with a view to achieving the stated objectives.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the presence of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, which underscores the importance of these meetings. Similarly, the delegation of Ecuador associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Chile on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Rio Group, respectively.

Generally speaking, the subject of disarmament covers two main areas: weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Setting aside the analysis of chemical and biological weapons, for which international conventions banning such weapons have been established, it must be said that, regarding the first component — weapons of mass destruction — only an exclusive group of countries has access to the possession and use of nuclear weapons. Beyond the legality of such weapons, as conferred under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the international community is concerned about the legitimacy of their use and possession. Everyone is aware of the markedly disproportionate emphasis given to the dangers of nuclear non-proliferation in comparison with that given to nuclear disarmament, despite the fact that both are given equal weight under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In that regard, the implementation of the third pillar of that instrument — the right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes — is not free of controversy either, given that its benefits have not had the desired impact. It is a sad paradox that we have had to witness how the devastating events of recent years have revealed the dangers inherent in the use and management of nuclear energy. Indeed, that is precisely the pillar intended to benefit the peoples of the world. Given the evidence, one cannot help but be indignant at the stubborn attachment to the continued use of nuclear energy for military purposes as a means of deterrence, when it also well known that such use would have a horrendous and indiscriminate impact, undermining human rights and international humanitarian law and shattering any notion of humanism or humanity.

Thus, if the legitimacy of the mere possession — not to the mention use — of nuclear weapons is being called into question, the need for a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances is legitimate, given the catastrophic consequences of the use or misuse of nuclear weapons, while a legal instrument on nuclear disarmament is being negotiated. The threat of nuclear weapons will be successfully overcome only by their total prohibition and destruction.

Ecuador is clearly in favour of universal disarmament and peace, as well as sustainable development in harmony with nature. In its capacity as a contracting party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, Ecuador expresses its strong desire for the details of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East to be defined as soon as possible.

With respect to conventional weapons, Ecuador supports the objectives of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and welcomes the upcoming meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts. Ecuador welcomes the two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, held in July 2010 and February 2011, and offers to actively cooperate in its future sessions. In that regard, Ecuador believes that the instrument emanating from the Conference should be objective, predictable and non-discriminatory, and provide for respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of peoples to self-determination and self-defence. The success of the treaty will depend on the consideration of all the opinions and criteria set forth by States. Along these lines, we hope to see the negotiations continue as contemplated.

Ecuador regrets the slow progress of the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. In this context, we believe that we can no longer delay convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which, in keeping with the agreements reached at the first special session of 1978, should focus on the analysis and evaluation of the functioning of the disarmament machinery — the Conference, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee — as it formulates alternative solutions for improving its effectiveness.

Finally, I reiterate my delegation's initial offer to work with the Chair and the Disarmament Commission towards our stated goals, which are urgent in the eyes of the international community.

Mrs. Ancidey (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my statement by congratulating Mr. Al Bayati on his election as Chair of this Commission for 2011. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We acknowledge and express thanks for the work carried out by the Chair of the Commission and the Chairs of the two Working Groups in 2010. Likewise, Venezuela wishes to acknowledge the work of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Sergio Duarte.

My delegation endorses the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Rio Group.

The proceedings of the Disarmament Commission have begun yet again in the context of great expectations for nuclear disarmament, which, notwithstanding the efforts and commitments entered into, have not yet been fulfilled. The Disarmament Commission, the only specialized deliberative body and of universal composition among the disarmament mechanisms duly established by the United Nations, will allow us to identify ways to develop the elements agreed in the action plan contained in the outcome document (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)) of last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In that regard, we are fully committed to the success of the Commission in achieving agreement on the three agenda items: "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

Recent events in the disarmament agenda reaffirm once again that the quest for understanding in this field is without doubt a matter of political will. That is why the Disarmament Commission remains more than ever a fundamental forum for the exchange of opinions and positions on nuclear disarmament, which must be turned into recommendations to the General Assembly. However, we are concerned that the Commission has been unable achieve tangible results for several years now.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its commitment to the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. With that in mind, it acknowledges that this would be an expeditious way to ensure that humankind does not live imperilled and in the shadow of the possible use of such weapons. General and complete nuclear disarmament is an objective inextricably linked to the building of a world of peace.

Since the start of the nuclear-weapon era, the world has lived under the latent threat of a nuclear attack. Many wish to forget that and seek to divert international public attention towards issues that may be important in their own terms but are lower than nuclear disarmament on the scale of priorities, since they do not halt the threat of extermination entailed by nuclear weapons and their ongoing improvement.

The destructive range and degree of a nuclear weapon are vast. Therefore, the mere existence of these weapons without doubt poses one of the gravest dangers to humankind. Those who call for and practice peace continue to await general and complete nuclear disarmament. Venezuela believes that disarmament and non-proliferation efforts should be promoted alongside those to ensure compliance with the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation, horizontal and vertical alike. This is an interdependent process that will make no headway until the nuclear Powers, first and foremost, take concrete steps to honour their commitments.

Although our country had hoped to see broader understanding at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held from 3 to 28 May 2010, its results nevertheless offer an opportunity to strengthen the momentum towards dialogue and the multilateral negotiation of agreements and disarmament measures that would allow us to overcome the unilateralism and distrust that have adversely affected disarmament diplomacy for almost 10 years. My delegation reiterates its appeal to the nuclear-weapon States to comply with the provisions of the NPT, and more specifically those of article VI. At the same time, we reject the selective application of this instrument. Respect for and compliance with the three pillars of the Treaty are essential to striking the balance necessary to strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Venezuela once more expresses its concern over the strategic defence doctrines currently being promoted by the nuclear Powers as essential to promoting and developing military alliances and military deterrence policies. We wonder how the international community can develop confidence-building measures geared towards disarmament and non-proliferation if we are embroiled in a process characterized by profound distrust and aggravated by such doctrines. That is why Venezuela considers that the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances represents a measure of special importance to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Having overcome the tribulations of the Cold War, there is no moral or political justification for the security doctrines of the nuclear Powers to continue to be based on the first-use approach.

Venezuela feels that an agreement on a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade would have a very positive impact on international efforts to meet ongoing challenges in disarmament and non-proliferation. At the same time, it would be an effective tool for guaranteeing that the peoples we represent have a safer life. The draft declaration must contain explicit support for the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, for which an organizational session is to be held this year, in accordance with resolution 65/66.

Moreover, the declaration must include specific references to the threats and challenges facing the international community, including, first, the accelerated improvement and modernization of nuclear weapons; secondly, the possible acquisition of these weapons by terrorist groups, even when these weapons are held only by the nuclear-weapon States themselves, which have the prime and absolute responsibility for preventing such diversion; thirdly, the potential use of these systems by nuclear-weapon States against those that have pledged not to develop such technology; and lastly, the concept according to which the only genuine guarantee that these threats will end is the total and complete destruction of such weapons demanded by all humankind.

Therefore, the greatest responsibility for implementing measures to reduce and eliminate nuclear arsenals is incumbent on the nuclear-weapon States, in keeping with the letter and spirit of the NPT, in order to guarantee a safer world free from nuclear threats.

While the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is perfectly aware of the positive contribution that the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures in the field of conventional weapons can make to the maintenance of international peace and security, it is important, in order to achieve real progress in the fields of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, to consider the extension of such voluntary provisions to other types of weapons, in other words, weapons of mass destruction.

With this in mind, Venezuela notes with concern the position of some countries that would prevent the international community from having access to transparent and accurate information on their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. Likewise, given the tremendous threat posed to humanity by the very existence of such types of weapons and their possible use, progress must be made in establishing confidence-building measures relating to this sphere as well.

Our country believes that the unilateral measures taken by certain countries to apply restrictions or limitations on sales of conventional arms to certain States on the basis of biased political considerations go against the spirit of fostering and promoting confidence and also undermine the legitimate right of all countries to acquire weapons in order to meet their legitimate defence needs.

Venezuela fully supports the creation of a climate of trust and security among all countries. Likewise, we are convinced that the strengthening of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects requires the support of the international community so as to enable continued efforts to be made in support of strengthening international cooperation through mechanisms that are complementary to national efforts. However, we reiterate our appeal that such cooperation be forthcoming without any political conditions, respecting the sovereign right of States to determine their own priorities and needs.

My delegation underscores the importance of the implementation by all States of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The negotiation and adoption of that

instrument as a legally binding commitment will facilitate the identification of sources of illicit weapons and consequently will determine their origins as well as the routes used in and the incidence of illicit trafficking.

There is a need to institute systems for the tracing of weapons, not only in the context of import systems but beginning from the very moment when such weapons are manufactured, through the establishment of automated registry systems and the promotion of cooperation in the tracking of arms when they are licitly transferred.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela highlights as a key factor in tackling this issue the special responsibility incumbent upon the Governments of those States in which public and private companies manufacture such weapons to establish stringent controls that ensure, or at least help to prevent, such weapons from being diverted towards the illicit trade.

The responsibility of States that manufacture such weapons cannot be the same as that of countries that do not produce them. Therefore, in tackling this issue, we must take into account this distinction if we wish measures taken in the context of international cooperation to have a favourable impact on the effective fight against this illicit trade.

I would like to reiterate the readiness and commitment of my delegation to ensure that the proceedings of the Commission are successful.

Ms. Tawfiq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to extend our sincere thanks to participating delegations and to the Group of Asian States for having elected Iraq to the chairmanship of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission this year. The task entrusted to us at this time has great symbolism for Iraq, given that Iraq is assuming the chairmanship of a disarmament entity for the first time since 1991, when it was subject to sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations owing to the aggressive armament policies adopted by the former regime and used against unarmed Iraqis and their neighbours.

Today Iraq has pledged to live at peace with itself and its neighbours, and it has succeeded in its efforts to see an end put to the restrictions that were imposed by the Security Council for reasons that are well known to all. It was been able, with the help and support of friends, to have those restrictions removed by the Security Council by its resolution 1957 (2010), and it is taking steps to regain its place in the international community as a cooperative country that is active in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Having congratulated the Chair, I should like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election, and the Secretariat for the excellent work it has been doing. My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My Government believes in the importance of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative, specialized body in the field of disarmament and an important means of ensuring international peace and security. In that regard, we would like to make the following points on various aspects of disarmament.

With regard to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, we should like to reaffirm that nuclear non-proliferation can be realized only if all States accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and place all their installations and programmes under the comprehensive safeguards agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with a view to determining that those programmes have peaceful purposes.

My Government also believes in its responsibility to respect and implement international non-proliferation and disarmament instruments and stresses our commitment thereto. As a reflection of that commitment, the Iraqi Constitution, in its article 9(E), stipulates that the Iraqi Government shall respect and implement all international instruments with regard to non-proliferation and the development, production and use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The Constitution also prohibits the development, manufacture or use of such weapons, together with any technologies or equipment that can be used in their manufacture or delivery systems.

The national control entity in Iraq has also drafted a specific law aimed at establishing a unified national system in the context of our commitment to international non-proliferation and disarmament treaties that would cover the material and equipment used in the production, possession, storage, import or export of such weapons and ensure that none of these

devolve into proscribed activities, determine penalties, if necessary, and establish mechanisms for the submission of declarations on and licensing procedures for dual-use material, in accordance with NPT guarantees and the verification system for chemical and biological weapons.

It is worth noting that Iraq acceded to the NPT in 1969 and signed the Model Protocol Additional to the Agreements between States and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards on 9 October 2008, which is now before Parliament for its consideration and adoption. Iraq also voluntarily declared its commitment to apply the Protocol on 17 February 2010 and, in accordance with article 17 of the Protocol, submitted its first declaration in this regard on 16 July 2010. Iraq also ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in February 2009 and signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 19 August 2008. It acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in 1991. It has also joined The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, becoming the one hundred and thirty-first party thereto on 11 August 2010. Iraq also submitted its first declaration in this regard on 30 March 2011 and has acceded to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. The country has also signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and is currently in the process of establishing a comprehensive national strategy in those fields.

Great efforts have been made at the international level in the field of disarmament. However, the continued possession of nuclear arsenals by nuclear-weapon States and their development of new types of weapons and delivery systems is a great source of concern.

It is imperative that an agreement be reached on a legally binding international instrument providing guarantees to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Measures aimed at making progress towards that objective should also be established. Negative security assurances are an essential step in that direction, in addition to being a legitimate demand of non-nuclear-weapon States, which have voluntarily given up any nuclear military option by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In this regard, we would like to underscore the importance we attach to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which affirms that the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons is in contravention of international law relating to armed conflicts and reasserts the commitment of States to seek to conduct negotiations on nuclear disarmament in good faith, under a strict international control system.

My delegation also stresses the importance of establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction as an important step towards complete disarmament and in support of international peace and security. On the basis of this position, Iraq has contributed to efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in various geographic areas, in particular in the Middle East. We would like to reaffirm, in this regard, our support for Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991). Any effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East must necessarily be preceded by a number of basic steps, including nuclear disarmament by Israel, its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the submission of its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

My delegation also reiterates the importance of implementing the decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference calling for an international conference to be held in 2012 with a view to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the region. The 1995 resolution should be taken as the reference point for that effort.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to assert the importance of consultations among neighbouring countries regarding the establishment of nuclear reactors near border areas. Appropriate measures must be taken in this regard, under the supervision of the IAEA and other international and regional organizations concerned with the environment, in order to limit the negative effects on the environment in all regions and to guarantee that no leaks occur, which may harm people and the environment. Densely populated areas must also be taken into consideration and the protection of rivers and other waterways given great importance

when such decisions are taken. There must also be an absolute commitment to nuclear safety criteria and due account given to the fact that any radioactive leak may have catastrophic consequences on both humans and the environment.

The Chair took the Chair.

The work before us in the Disarmament Commission is of great importance and has a major impact on international disarmament efforts. Our Commission has made a great contribution to the development of international criteria for disarmament. My delegation stands ready to cooperate fully with all members of the Commission to make progress towards our common goal of disarmament.

Mr. Cox (United Kingdom): May I begin by joining other nations in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on the assumption of your positions. I can assure you that you will find the United Kingdom a constructive partner in supporting your efforts.

The United Kingdom fully endorses the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Hungary on behalf of the European Union yesterday morning (see A/CN.10/PV.310). We would like to add some further comments in our national capacity.

The United Kingdom Government remains committed to the long-term objective of a world without nuclear weapons. We have a strong record on fulfilling our disarmament commitments and meeting our international and legal obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The United Kingdom is committed to maintaining only a minimum nuclear deterrent. We have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and ceased production of fissile material for military purposes.

The successful conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, together with the welcome recent ratification of the New START agreement by the United States and Russia, has given us a critical boost for disarmament efforts in the year ahead. We will continue to seek to work with the international community to build upon the momentum that those developments have generated in order to make further progress.

The October 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining a minimum effective nuclear deterrent but also contained a number of new disarmament measures. We announced that the United Kingdom would reduce the number of warheads onboard each of our submarines from 48 to 40; reduce our requirement for operationally available warheads from fewer than 160 to no more than 120; reduce the number of operational missiles on the Vanguard class submarines to no more than eight; and reduce our overall nuclear-weapon stockpile to no more than 180 by the mid-2020s. We also announced a new, stronger security assurance that the United Kingdom would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

The announcements in the October 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review complemented other commitments the United Kingdom has made on disarmament. In September 2009, we hosted a conference of the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5) on confidence-building measures towards nuclear disarmament, and we look forward to further engaging with the P-5 at the 2011 conference in Paris to make progress against our commitments in the NPT action plan. We are continuing research with a non-nuclear weapon State, Norway, into the verification challenges of nuclear disarmament, taking forward our long-running collaboration. We firmly believe that increasing transparency and developing technical, military and political solutions to the practical challenges of disarmament are vital to making tangible progress towards our ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

We are disappointed, however, that, despite the momentum that has been generated by these positive developments, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva remains deadlocked. In spite of the approval in 2009 of a programme of work (CD/1864) that mandated, by consensus, discussions on all agenda items and the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, there has been no progress to that end. We have repeatedly expressed our willingness to engage on all four core Conference on Disarmament issues, which should all be discussed as part of any programme of work. We will continue to work with the international community to reach an agreement based on CD/1864.

The United Kingdom looks forward to working with the international community here in the

Disarmament Commission and in other international forums to control proliferation, make progress on multilateral disarmament, build trust and confidence between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States and take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world, where countries with nuclear weapons ultimately feel able to relinquish them.

The spread of nuclear weapons poses a threat to the security of all States. Conversely, effective non-proliferation is a critical enabler for nuclear disarmament. Efforts to abolish nuclear weapons cannot succeed if we cannot stop them from spreading. It is therefore essential that all parties fully comply with the provisions of the NPT. Otherwise, the confidence necessary for parties to take measures to strengthen the Treaty will be further eroded, with dire consequences for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Kingdom continues to believe that the proliferation of weapons and materials of mass destruction to non-State actors remains a serious threat. International non-proliferation regimes and initiatives have an important role in combating this threat. The United Kingdom supports the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and is working to achieve this goal through national programmes and international initiatives. The United Kingdom is active in a number of non-proliferation initiatives, including the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Group of Eight Global Partnership and the Nuclear Security Summit process.

Universal adherence to the Additional Protocol is fundamental to the non-proliferation regime because it provides the necessary minimum assurances that nuclear technologies are being used peacefully. If we are to build on the successes of May 2010, we also need to work together on strengthening the Treaty, including with regard to non-compliance and ensuring that any benefits accrued as a member are not kept if a country chooses, as is its sovereign right, to withdraw.

The United Kingdom extends its deepest sympathy to Japan for the terrible events of the past few weeks. It is too early to say what the impact will be for peaceful-uses activities, but we are reassured by the International Atomic Energy Agency's announcement of a high-level conference on nuclear safety in June and remain committed to continuously improving nuclear safety standards.

The United Kingdom looks forward to supporting the Chair's efforts to encourage constructive engagement at this year's session of the Disarmament Commission across the agenda, including in the discussions in the Working Group III on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. The United Kingdom fully supports ongoing negotiations on an arms trade treaty and looks forward to further progress at the July Preparatory Committee and at the conference next year.

We look forward to the opportunity over the coming weeks to exchange views with other States on the best ways to build upon the successful 2010 NPT Review Conference and to make progress across the three pillars of the action plan that were agreed last May. This includes sharing concrete ideas on how best to take forward work towards a the successful holding in 2012 of a conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, something that the three depository States are committed to achieving.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): Let me echo other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on your well-deserved elections.

Since the last session of the Disarmament Commission, there has been important progress in some areas of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. Norway welcomes the positive outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is important that we are able to follow-up on the action plan adopted as a major outcome of the Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50(Vol. I)).

While New START is a bilateral Treaty, its entry into force is an important step in drawing down existing nuclear arsenals, with a view to achieving their total elimination.

Norway is encouraged by the way the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions have established and consolidated global norms prohibiting weapons that cause unacceptable harm to civilians, norms which go beyond the membership of these two legally binding multilateral instruments. Indeed, it has been shown that, in the field of humanitarian disarmament, it is possible for those who are ambitious to set the agenda and achieve results in the field. This is clearly not the case for other areas of disarmament.

Norway is pleased at the initiative of the Secretary-General to move multilateral disarmament and arms control forward. The High-level Meeting of the General Assembly held in September last year reconfirmed the deep frustration of most Member States over the long-standing impasse that has paralysed the formal multilateral machinery, rendering it increasingly dysfunctional. The Conference on Disarmament is designated as a negotiating body, yet no negotiations have taken place for a decade and a half. The long-standing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament denies the international community the possibility of moving forward on pressing disarmament issues and of implementing the important steps set out by the recent NPT Review Conference.

Additionally, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, despite its broad support, seems not to be on the horizon. Time is also running out for the preparation of the Middle East conference called for in the decisions of the NPT Review Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament is struggling. The same can be said about the Disarmament Commission. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Sergio Duarte, noted in his statement yesterday that the Commission has not been able to reach consensus for more than a decade. My delegation agrees with High Representative Duarte that the fate of this year's report remains in the hands of Commission members, but it is clear that the working methods of the Commission also have an important impact on whether this body can provide added value.

It is obvious that the Commission has not delivered the results that were expected when the General Assembly adopted decision 52/492. While much can be said about Member States and their lack of political will, we need to examine whether the current structure of three-year cycles, two broad topics and, not least, the consensual reports allows us to make the best use of the Commission.

Let me assure you, Sir, that Norway intends to contribute to reaching consensus at this year's session of the Commission. But, frankly, we are not very optimistic about the prospects. Is it feasible for the Disarmament Commission to adopt language stronger than that agreed at the NPT Review Conference last year? Do we really believe that the Commission will make a breakthrough on conventional confidence-building measures, small arms or an arms trade treaty? If we do reach agreement on a report, I believe that it will be a rather modest one.

Norway has, on a number of occasions, and not least in the First Committee, advocated a profound assessment of the Commission. We believe this is necessary, even if at this session we were to succeed in achieving consensus on a report.

Given its role as a deliberative body, the Disarmament Commission should seek to stimulate discussions and build common understanding on clearly defined topics on global disarmament and non-proliferation. These topics could be set out by the First Committee.

As a deliberative body, the Disarmament Commission should not be hostage to an outdated consensus rule. Norway believes that the outcome of Disarmament Commission sessions could be a Chair's summary reflecting the discussions, identifying areas where there might be a convergence of views and where positions are still far apart. Such an outcome may facilitate the work of the General Assembly, the First Committee and, possibly, the individual treaty bodies.

Like the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission is at a crossroads. If we continue with business as usual, the Commission will be further marginalized and lose its relevance. Hopefully, there will be time during this session to discuss the future role of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the 2011 session of the Disarmament Commission. We also congratulate the members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections. We assure them of Nigeria's support and full participation in the deliberations.

The Nigerian delegation wishes to express its appreciation to Ambassador Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, Chair of the 2010 session of the Disarmament Commission, and to the previous Chairs of the Working Groups for their hard work during the last session. We also commend the insightful overview of the issues contained in the opening statement of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Sergio Duarte.

Nigeria commiserates with the Government and people of Japan over the recent tragedies caused by the earthquake and tsunami. We commend and admire the resilience and determination of the people of Japan, and hope for a quick return to normalcy as the nation of Japan heals and recovers.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group. Having said this, we would like to highlight the following issues.

We acknowledge a number of positive global developments in the context of nuclear disarmament, but reiterate the need for unrelenting efforts to attain the noble objective of a world free of nuclear weapons and, indeed, of all weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation remains concerned that the continued existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a credible threat to international peace and security. We reiterate that nuclear disarmament should remain the highest priority of Member States, and we are convinced that multilateral consultations remain the best way to negotiate international instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation. We view this as a core principle endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/50.

My delegation urges both the nuclear-weapon and the non-nuclear-weapon States to completely fulfil their pledges and commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other internationally agreed instruments. We reiterate the need for all to redouble efforts to honour their obligations under article VI of the NPT with respect to the decisions to take credible steps towards disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, in all their aspects, in a transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner.

Nigeria views the NPT as fundamental to protecting global peace and security from the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. While we call on nuclear-weapon States to implement in good faith all their obligations and commitments under the NPT, these obligations should also extend to States not party to the NPT possessing nuclear weapons.

Nigeria reiterates its position that the nuclear-weapon States should, in addition to implementing these obligations, honour agreed international instruments, desist from developing new types of nuclear weapons, and grant unconditional negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States as a matter of urgency, in conformity with the principles of the NPT and within a legally binding framework.

My delegation commends the various unilateral and bilateral efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. We further welcome the signing on 8 April 2010 of the New START agreement between the United States and Russia, which is the latest effort by these countries to commit themselves to the further reduction and limitation of their strategic nuclear arsenals. We hope that, as a first step, the full implementation of the pact will ensure a drastic reduction in the number of deployed nuclear weapons.

We are equally concerned about the slow pace of progress in the activities of Working Group I on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We therefore urge States parties, most especially nuclear-weapon States, to engage constructively in order to break this impasse.

The goal of the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament, under strict and effective international control, to strengthen international peace and security. My delegation therefore urges Member States to sustain the significance and continued validity of the consensus outcome of the first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2). In addition to this, we would like to stress the importance of the Conference on Disarmament and underscore the need to proceed with negotiations in the Conference on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a given time frame.

We consider the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to be a significant step towards the realization of a systematic process leading to nuclear disarmament. We therefore call for the early entry into force of the CTBT. We believe that a lot more needs to be done in the enforcement of this comprehensive ban on all forms of nuclear test explosions, and hereby call on nuclear-weapon States to abide by relevant moratoriums on nuclear test explosions before the entry into force of the CTBT. We also urge, as an important disarmament priority, the commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile

material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

The realization that the world still harbours over 20,000 nuclear weapons in its arsenals is a matter of great concern to me delegation. The continued existence of these weapons continues to encourage the doctrine that favours their possession and use despite the danger they pose to regional and international peace and security. We therefore acknowledge yet again the landmark entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba on 15 July 2009. We call on all nuclear-weapon States and other United Nations Member States that have not yet ratified the Treaty's Protocol to do so without further delay.

My delegation would like to reiterate Nigeria's support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in furtherance of the objectives of the resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex) adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We call on all States in the region and nuclear-weapon States to support the urgent establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region.

Nigeria is concerned about the exponential rise in the costs and consequences of military expenditures, which have risen to a figure of $1.5 trillion. We therefore call for a new global arrangement that will mainstream disarmament and development issues and promote security through greater openness. We urge member States to highlight the direct relationship between disarmament and development, and to strive to reduce the diversion of global human and economic resources towards the manufacture and acquisition of armaments.

The developing world has paid a heavy price arising from the effects of the illicit acquisition, manufacture and circulation of conventional weapons. We acknowledge the urgent need for Member States to effectively regulate the trade in and global movement of arms. There is also an urgent need for Member States to engage in a wide range of conflict-prevention measures, including those related to illicit small arms and light weapons. To this end, my delegation supports the goals of the United Nations and its established bodies and agencies on issues such as transparency in armaments, ammunition marking and tracing, landmines, cluster munitions and regional disarmament programmes.

We welcome the contribution of Member States during the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty on elements of an arms trade treaty. We call on Member States to redouble their efforts as we prepare for the third Preparatory Committee in July 2011.

Finally, Nigeria appeals for a sustained but meaningful dialogue as we begin the deliberations in the Working Groups. We also wish Member States fruitful discussions during this session of the Disarmament Commission. Nigeria will make a constructive contribution to the deliberations.

Mr. Pham Vinh Quang (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to extend our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2011 substantive session. I am sure that, under your capable stewardship, the session will have a successful outcome. I also congratulate the other Bureau members on their elections.

Viet Nam would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

This year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission convenes at a critical juncture, when the world is faced with a complex situation calling for a new impetus in addressing the urgent issues of nuclear danger, disarmament and non-proliferation. The year 2010 witnessed some important international conferences and commitments on disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the New START agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation; the Nuclear Security Summit, in Washington D.C.; and the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While we take note of these certain positive developments, Viet Nam believes that much remains to be done with a view to achieving a consensus and comprehensive solution to the core issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The international community should make more tangible efforts to attain the goal of nuclear disarmament. We are of the view that the long-standing deadlock preventing substantial progress in the field of

nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation can be broken by promoting multilateralism and emphasizing the central role of the United Nations in the process.

My delegation underscores the vital importance of the Disarmament Commission as the subsidiary body of the General Assembly tasked as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery allowing for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. We reaffirm our continued support for the work of the Commission. We believe that, with reinvigorated political will, Member States will enable the Disarmament Commission to make more contributions at this substantive session to the shared goal of disarmament and arms control.

With regard to the first agenda item, my delegation reaffirms Viet Nam's full support for general and complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. To this end, we support all initiatives aimed at nuclear disarmament in a genuine, transparent, irreversible and internationally verifiable manner, and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects. However, we note that substantive progress has yet to be made, notwithstanding the genuine efforts made by the Non-Aligned Movement during the 2010 substantive session of the Commission, especially in Working Group I on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We hope that at this session the Commission will be able to agree on more concrete and substantive recommendations to this effect. In this connection, my delegation fully supports the proposal submitted by NAM to Working Group I, and calls on the Working Group to give it proper consideration.

Viet Nam wishes to underline the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We call on the Conference to agree on a balanced, comprehensive programme of work by, among other things, establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible. We also deem it necessary to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. We support all steps aimed at prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and providing for the destruction of all nuclear weapons.

In line with its full commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Viet Nam signed the ratification instrument of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 2006 and concluded the Additional Protocol to its Nuclear Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2007.

Viet Nam underscores the crucial role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in achieving regional and international peace and security. We strongly support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. At the regional level, as a member of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, Viet Nam is working hard with other States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to ensure the South-East Asian region is free of nuclear weapons. We would like to take this opportunity to urge the nuclear-weapon States to accede to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Protocol with a view to enhancing confidence-building measures between the nuclear-weapon States and the South-East Asian countries.

With regard to the agenda item "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade", we believe that it is time for the international community to agree on such a declaration, thus highlighting the importance and priority that the issue of disarmament deserves. We note with regret that, despite its constructive and substantive discussions in 2010, Working Group II was unable to conclude its work at that session. We believe that delegations need to demonstrate the necessary political will and flexibility during the 2011 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in order to reach a consensus on recommendations on the elements of such a draft declaration.

In conclusion, we call on Member States to work in an open-minded, flexible and forward-looking manner, consistent with the relevant guidelines adopted by the General Assembly, to achieve a tangible agreement at this substantive session. We are ready to work closely with you, Sir, the Bureau and all other delegations for a successful outcome of the session.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker on my list. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all representatives for their kind words addressed to me and the other Bureau members, and to thank the Vice-Chairs who helped me chair these meetings.

We have just completed the general debate. I have detected a sense of urgency in many statements. Indeed, in the third year of the current cycle, the international community expects the Disarmament Commission to act as the main deliberative body in the area of disarmament and to produce results.

As members are aware, we are facing an unusual situation in that we must consider three substantive agenda items in the final year of the cycle. Members are also aware that the current situation is the product of a consensus decision we reached in 2009 in order to emerge from our deadlock over the substantive agenda items before the Commission.

We have established three Working Groups, two of which are still without a Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the regional groups to expedite their consultations on the selection of the Chairs of Working Groups I and III.

In the meantime, we need to work very hard to complete the process started in Working Group II on elements of the draft declaration. I wish the Chair of that Group, Mr. Kayode Laro of Nigeria, all of the Commission's goodwill in bringing the work of the Group to a successful conclusion. The Group already has a draft document to work on. We need to see the bigger picture and focus on what unites us, rather than on what divides us. I again appeal to all delegations to concentrate on those elements that command consensus and try to forge common ground on the draft declaration so as to enable the General Assembly to proclaim the fourth disarmament decade.

Working Group III also has a document that was extensively debated during the previous cycle. As soon as we have a Chair for that Group, I hope that work will proceed quickly to produce a document that can command consensus.

Despite the absence of any written document in Working Group I, we can still try to achieve some results there as well. Again, we will not be starting from scratch, as Working Group I has already discussed in detail all relevant issues related to achieving nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. All of those ideas should probably be put in writing.

Having made this short inventory of issues before the Working Groups, I would like to say a few words about the working methods of the Commission.

I do not think that we should invent anything here. I believe that the Disarmament Commission has sufficient procedural tools and methods at its disposal to improve the efficiency of its work. What we need at this stage is to demonstrate political will and effectively use the tools that are already in place.

In that regard, let me remind delegations that in 2006 the Commission adopted a set of recommendations that, if implemented, could greatly contribute to resolving the issues that we are facing today. Some of the recommendations were as follows:

> "Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies should be elected at an organizational session of the Commission, if possible at least three months before the beginning of the substantive session. The regional groups should accordingly present their candidates as soon as possible to ensure that such elections take place within that time frame;
>
> "Member States are encouraged to adopt the draft agenda of the substantive session of the Commission as early as possible at the organizational meetings of the Commission;
>
> "Member States are encouraged to present their national working documents to the Commission as early as possible before the beginning of the substantive session to facilitate deliberation in the meetings ahead." (*A/61/42, para. 16*)

Of course, my remarks should not be regarded as a criticism of the Commission or its current methods of work, but rather as a friendly reminder of the tools that we already have in our possession, which should be used effectively.

So what should be the way out for us, at least in the last year of the cycle? I would like to take this opportunity to again appeal to all delegations to see the big picture in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill, and to overcome the issues that divide us. We should focus on those issues that unite all of us. Of course, as individual Member States, we should not compromise our security concerns. However, I believe that, with the greater goal of the common good in mind, we could make an effort to finish the current session on a positive note.

Organization of work

The Chairman: In the absence of Chairs for Working Groups I and III, let me propose that we give priority to Working Group II, which is chaired by our colleague from Nigeria. Group II will hold two meetings tomorrow. I do not think that we should revise our programme of work, contained in document A/CN.10/2011/CRP.1. In my opinion, we should revise it by way of daily announcements in the *Journal of the United Nations*, depending on the situation.

Are there any delegations wishing to take the floor on the issues that I have just raised?

Mr. Farghal (Egypt): Just to clarify, are we having two Working Group II meetings tomorrow, one in the morning and one in the afternoon?

The Chair: Yes, we will have only Group II, which will have two meetings tomorrow.

Mr. Farghal (Egypt): I do not know how the other members feel, but my delegation would prefer to have the Working Group II meetings in the morning, because we already have a Chair for that Group. The Chair could use the afternoon session to consult with the geographical groups. Who would chair Working Group I?

The Chair: Working Group I will be chaired by a representative from the Group of Western European and other States. Working Group III will be chaired by a representative from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Farghal (Egypt): With your indulgence, Sir, could the Chair use the afternoon session to consult with the other two Working Groups to determine the Chairs of each?

The Chair: I have to say that we were initially planning to have Groups I and II start tomorrow and Group III at a later stage, in accordance with requests made by some Member States. But now, since we have a Chair only for Group II, we will have to hold both meetings tomorrow. I have been informed that the Western European countries will probably have a Chair for Group I tomorrow. If we hear something tomorrow, we will so inform the Member States.

Mr. Laudi (Germany): As I am taking the floor for the first time, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your important duties.

I would like to support the proposal made by you, Sir. I think that it is very sensible and pragmatic. It is the way that we should proceed. I would like at least to reflect my delegation's position, which may not be shared by the whole room, but is, I hope, by some delegations. We should proceed by holding two sessions of Working Group II, which already has a facilitator. In that way, we will make the best use of our allotted time.

The Chair: I thank the representative of Germany for his kind words and for supporting my proposal.

Is there any more support for my proposal?

Mr. Kvarnström (Sweden): I would like to take the floor very briefly to support what the representative of Germany just said. I think that, in the spirit of what we and others mentioned in our statements with regard to getting down to work, it would be a shame not to take advantage of the time available to the Working Group for which we actually do have a Chair. I believe that the other consultations can be carried out simultaneously.

Mr. Arrocha (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to take the floor briefly to support the Chair's proposal and to echo the statements made by my colleagues from Germany and Sweden.

Ms. Douti (Greece): As this is the first time that I take the floor, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your duties and to wish you every possible success. Of course, I also wish to assure you of my assistance to that end.

I would like to express my support for the positions taken by my German and Swedish colleagues on this issue.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair and to wish you every success. We have great confidence in your diplomatic skill.

My delegation would like to know, Sir, what mechanism you will use with respect to appointing Chairs. At the moment, geographic groups are still consulting. What will happen after that?

The Chair (*spoke in Arabic*): With regard to your question about geographic groups' consultations, Working Group I will be chaired by a representative

selected by the Group of Western European and other States. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States is currently holding consultations. We hope that we will very soon have a nominee to chair Working Group III. As some Member States have supported my proposal, we will have a meeting of Working Group II under the chairmanship of Nigeria while the Chairs for the other two Working Groups are selected.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): I would like to echo the support that has been made for your proposal, Mr. Chair. I think it makes a lot of sense because, if we prioritize the work of Working Group II, we will have more time for consultations, and that will result in a better use of time in terms of the other Working Groups.

Mr. Cassidy (Indonesia): It seems that the statements are beginning to reflect a consensus position on this issue. If it is possible, Mr. Chair, I would propose a suspension of 15 to 30 minutes in order that the Non-Aligned Movement group can respond to your proposal. I make this request because several positions have been expressed and we need to reflect upon them. We know that Working Group II is the only one with a Chair, and we recognize the relevance of pushing forward with that Working Group.

However, let me remind all the delegations that Working Group I is just as important as Working Group II. We therefore need to take a decision that reflects the equality of the groups, not only with respect to time but also in terms of the issues themselves. It should not be the case that the issues to be dealt with by Working Group I or Working Group III are less important than those of Working Group II. That is the reason that I ask for a suspension, after which we can again talk about tomorrow's programme.

The Chair: The representative of Indonesia has proposed that we suspend the meeting for 15 to 30 minutes so that members of the Non-Aligned Movement can hold consultations about a Chair for Working Group I; as he said, it is as important as Working Group II.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): I apologize for taking the floor again. My understanding is that the Non-Aligned Movement has requested a suspension of 15 to 30 minutes to consult on the Chair's proposal to hold back-to-back meetings of Working Group II. As I understand it, the Chair of Working Group I must be from the Group of Western European and other States.

The Chair: My understanding was that the Non-Aligned Movement group wished to meet with a view to selecting a Chair for Working Group I. It has been pointed out to me, instead, that the group wishes to meet to discuss the proposal to hold two meetings of Working Group II tomorrow. I thank the representative of Bulgaria for that clarification.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to suspend the meeting for 15 to 30-minutes to allow the Non-Aligned Movement group to discuss that proposal.

It was so decided.

The meeting was suspended at 5.10 p.m. and resumed at 5.30 p.m.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, who had asked for the suspension in order to hold consultations among members of the Non-Aligned Movement group.

Mr. Cassidy (Indonesia): I thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing time for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group to hold consultations. I noted that other groups also held consultations, which is a good sign.

I would like to convey NAM's view regard to tomorrow's work programme. NAM would like to agree with the Chair's proposal of holding meetings of Working Group II in both the morning and afternoon of tomorrow. However, we would like to remind members that this should not be regarded as setting a precedent for our working methods for the following day.

In that context, NAM believes that, because the Disarmament Commission should always make the parallel nature and equality of the issues paramount in order to have a balanced outcome, there should be a meeting of Working Group I the day after tomorrow in order compensate for tomorrow's additional meeting of Working Group II.

I would also like to remind the other Groups of their responsibility to nominate Chairs for Working Groups I and III.

The Chair: NAM's proposal is to hold morning and afternoon meetings of Working Group II tomorrow, without setting a precedent for subsequent days, as the three Working Groups need to work in parallel. The NAM group has also urged that the other Groups select their Chairs so that we can hold a meeting of Working Group I the day after tomorrow.

Mr. Sanabria (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): In my national capacity, but having participated in a brief and entirely informal meeting of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to thank the representative of Indonesia, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement group, for his very constructive approach, which is consistent with what we have been discussing on our side.

The proposal made prior to the suspension was a pragmatic proposal and an important suggestion for us to make the most of the time available. But we are also certainly aware of the fact that there is a vacancy in the Chair of Working Group I, which must be filled by a candidate. We are working to identify a candidate. While we cannot be absolutely certain, we hope that we will be in a position to nominate a candidate tomorrow, so that work can proceed normally thereafter in the two other Working Groups.

The Chair: Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission decides, without setting a precedent, to hold two meetings of Working Group II tomorrow.

It was so decided.

The Chair: I hope that we will be able to elect the Chair for Working Group I tomorrow, so that the Group can start its work the following day.

I now give the floor to the Secretary of the Commission.

Mr. Cherniavsky (Secretary of the Commission): Many delegations have approached the Secretariat to obtain the document that was circulated at the final meeting of Working Group II last year. Since we were not clear about what the schedule would be — which was in fact just decided upon moments ago — we will circulate that document to delegations via email this evening. Paper copies will also be available here in the room tomorrow.

The Chair: I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aly (Egypt): On a procedural point, I presume that we will likely start Thursday's meeting in a plenary format in order to elect the Chair of Working Group I, thereafter moving on to work at the Working Group level.

The Chair: I agree with the representative of Egypt that we should begin our work Thursday with an organizational meeting to select the Chair of Working Group I, and then proceed with a meeting of Working Group I.

I would like to thank the Commission for the atmosphere of cooperation. I hope that it will continue so that we can move forward and achieve something in this important Commission. The whole world has its eyes on us to make progress. Hopefully, through this kind of cooperation, understanding, flexibility and compromise, we will be able to reach consensus to achieve results that we can announce to the world by the end of this session of the Commission.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.